CHAPTER **17**

Recreation: Concepts, Professions, and Issues

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Questions

- **How would you describe the changes in your own engagement in recreational activities from your earliest memories to today?**
- **What types of recreational activities do you seek out? Which would you describe as being physically active? What social dimensions do they include?**
- **What do you see as key strategies to ensure more equitable access to recreational activities and programs?**

Objectives

- **Explain how community parks and recreation programs contribute to promoting physical health across various age groups.**
- **Articulate current trends in recreation programming across the age groups.**
- **Identify the key barriers faced by community recreation programs.**

Key Concepts

- ***Leisure:*** **Activity that is intrinsically motivated and considered a personal choice**

- ***Play:*** **Specific type of leisure involving a lack of seriousness, where interaction is free-flowing and can take on new forms and foci as its needs shift**

- ***Recreation:*** **Activity that is often within a structured time frame and generally for a positive purpose such as physical or psychological health**

History of Leisure, Recreation, and Play

- ***Prehistoric societies:*** **Play-like activities were a critical way to prepare children for adult responsibilities**
- ***Athenian ideal:*** **Represented a combination of soldier, athlete, and artist**
- ***Ancient Rome:*** **Recreation or leisure primarily a diversion from work and enjoyed by only upper-class**
- ***Indigenous cultures:*** **Had numerous recreation and sport activities prior to the arrival of European colonizers**
- ***European colonizers (Puritans):*** **Minimal**

History of Leisure, Recreation, and Play *(continued)*

- **1636: First municipal park in the U.S., Boston Common.**
- **Mid-19th to early 20th centuries: U.S. social reformers used recreation to promote middle-class values.**
- **Today's YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, 4-H, and Girl Scouts developed during that time period.**
- **Today's recreation programs and spaces are provided by public, nonprofit, and private for-profit entities.**

Public Sector Providers

- **Primarily funded through tax support**
- **Most programs offered at the local level**
- **Generally, charge lower fees and attempt to meet the recreation and leisure needs of the entire community**

Nonprofit Providers

- **Exist to meet a specific need, often within a specific population**
- **Mission driven**
- **Rely on fundraising, grants, and donations as primary funding sources**

Commercial For-Profit Programs

- **Increasing number of for-profit programs, especially in youth sports**
- **May have highly trained coaches, specialized services, and high-quality equipment**
- **May also be more expensive, thus potentially excluding lower-income populations**

Parks

- **Benefits include improved physical and psychological health, positive feelings, an overall quality of life**
- **Benefits increase when parks also include programming**
- **Provide exposure to nature**
- **Provide an economic benefit to the surrounding community**
- **Careers include park maintenance, interpretation, rangers, and food and hospitality management**

Youth Services

- **Benefits of participation in out-of-school (OST) programming include increased confidence in school, improved school attendance, self-concept, and socialization.**
- **Over 10 million U.S. children participate in OST programs.**
- **Programs are offered for infants through teens.**
- **Services might offer STEM programs and healthy nutrition options and may also offer tutoring.**
- **Programming has shifted from an “at-risk” model to a “positive youth development” model.**

Senior Centers and Senior Programs

- **Declining birth rates and increased life expectancy have increased demand for senior programs and services.**
- **Centers and programs generally address socialization, physical health and fitness, and continuing education.**
- **Seniors also benefit from park spaces that allow for exercise and being outside.**

Additional Recreation Programs

- **Nature programs provide programs and spaces that focus on environmental education and exposure to nature.**

- **Aquatics programs**
  - **Learn to swim**
  - **Open swim**
  - **Masters and swim team**

- **Arts**
  - **Community art classes**
  - **Public art displays and performances**

Trends: Diversity and Equity

- **Parks and recreation's benefits differ across population segments.**
  - **Non-white individuals are less likely to perceive benefits.**
  - **Youth sport participation is significantly higher for youth in families with higher incomes.**
  - **Parks in non-white communities are smaller and more crowded than parks in predominantly white communities.**
- **Social equity is a core value of the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA).**

Trends: Inclusion for People of All Abilities

- **Increased focus on providing spaces and activities that individuals of all abilities can enjoy.**
- **Core principles are access, accommodation, and adaption.**
- ***Therapeutic recreation* uses recreation to address the needs of individuals with illness or other disabling conditions as a means to improve physical and mental well-being.**

Trends: Partnerships

- **Public–private partnerships (PPP) can include government, nonprofit, and/or commercial for-profit providers.**
- **Increasingly popular to address rising costs and reduced tax-dollar support of public programs.**
- **Partnerships exist along a continuum ranging from largely publicly managed to largely privately managed.**

Trends: Esports

- **Recreation providers are increasingly adding esports to the programming menu.**
- **There is some debate as to the value of esports.**
- **Providers view esports and gaming as a way to attract and engage youths, especially teens.**

Trends: Active Living for Older Adults

- **Senior recreation programs increasingly providing more active choices.**
  - **Exercise classes**
  - **Field trips or vacations**
  - **Art classes**
  - **Volunteer opportunities**
  - **Festivals**

- **Similar to broader trends, senior recreation programming relies on partnerships between social service and health care providers.**

Trends: Virtual Programming

- **Many recreation providers switched to virtual programming during the COVID-19 pandemic.**
- **Likely to continue in some form even after the pandemic as providers seek additional ways to engage participants in recreation programs.**

Activity

- **Select a local community recreation program and conduct a formal assessment of the extent to which it collaborates with the local school district in terms of shared use of facilities.**

- **Identify the demographics of the local community by age. Then select a community recreation program and identify the exact type and amount/frequency of programming offerings to the various age groups (i.e., children, youth, adults, older adults).**

Summary

- Recreation programming has a history that goes back to the early 20th century.
- Recreation programming is delivered through public, private, and nonprofit organizations.
- Parks play a major role creating recreation opportunities for all.
- Increasing cost of program delivery has given rise to more public–private partnerships.
- Tasks/Assignments:
- Next Class: